United Nations E/CN.6/2003/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 December 2002

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-seventh session
3-14 March 2003
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions

Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report summarizes steps taken by the Commission on the Status of Women to follow up on policy guidance provided by the Economic and Social Council to its functional commissions in 2002. It also proposes additional steps the Commission could take in this regard, in particular to highlight gender perspectives in the work of the Council and its other subsidiary bodies.

* E/CN.6/2003/1.

** The document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.

02-73583 (E) 060103

I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in exercising its oversight and management role, regularly provides policy guidance to its functional commissions. Since 1999, the President of the Council has informed the Chairpersons of the functional commissions of the outcomes of the Council's substantive session that especially require their follow-up and has drawn attention to relevant policy recommendations.

2. In his letter of 31 October 2002 to the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2003/9), the President drew attention to the outcome of the Council's coordination segment, noting that the Council had called on functional commissions to further enhance their role as the main forums for expert follow-up and review of United Nations conferences and summits. The President paid specific attention to Council resolution 2002/23, "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system", and the guidance provided to functional commissions in this regard.

3. Since 1999, reports have been submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women on past and planned actions of the Commission related specifically to the Council's policy recommendations. The present report focuses on the Council's guidance on gender mainstreaming and its invitation to the Commission to continue its efforts to highlight gender perspectives in the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies (see Council resolution 2002/23, para. 8).

II. Gender mainstreaming by the Economic and Social Council and the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women

4. The commitment of the Council to the gender-mainstreaming strategy and the Commission's facilitative role were evident in the outcome of the Council's substantive session of 2002 (see A/57/286, paras. 39-43). In its resolution 2002/23, the Council clearly stated its commitment to intensify gender mainstreaming in all its activities and those of its subsidiary bodies and to give appropriate attention, both during discussions and in the drafting of outcomes, to gender perspectives and the particular obstacles that women face.

5. Consistent with this commitment, the Council's ministerial declaration[1] recognized gender equality as one of the mutually reinforcing essential elements for progress in health and education. It stressed the need for gender mainstreaming in all human resources development policies and programmes, including in their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, so that they could effectively address gender inequalities. The declaration noted full and equal access to health care and education as fundamental for the achievement of gender equality, and called for increased attention to maternal, child and reproductive health and an integrated approach to education, including girls' education.

6. The Council's efforts to mainstream gender perspectives at the high-level segment were supported by a contribution from the Commission on the Status of Women that highlighted gender-specific action recommendations on human resources development from the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the

Commission's own work. At the time of finalization of the present report, the Council had not yet decided on the themes for its substantive session of 2003.

7. In other outcomes, the Council stressed the continued need for and relevance of integrating a gender perspective in the development and implementation of humanitarian assistance activities throughout all phases and in prevention and recovery strategies (see Council resolution 2002/32). The discussion of this issue was informed by the Commission's agreed conclusions on environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters, adopted at its forty-sixth session, in 2002.

8. It is recalled that the Council agreed to devote, before 2005, a coordination segment to a review and appraisal of the implementation of agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system.

III. Gender mainstreaming by the functional commissions and the catalytic role of the Commission on the Status of Women

9. Progress in gender mainstreaming and attention to the concerns of women in the work of the functional commissions was assessed in a report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council's substantive session of 2002 (E/2002/66), which provided a basis for the Council's consideration of gender mainstreaming at its substantive session. In June 2002 a panel discussion on gender mainstreaming in the work of the functional commissions, with the participation of the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the United Nations Forum on Forests, as well as the heads of divisions servicing these bodies, presented progress and challenges in integrating gender perspectives into their work, led to a number of recommendations and subsequently facilitated the Council's action under its new item on gender mainstreaming.

10. On the basis of both the report and the panel discussion, the Council noted the various ways in which functional commissions proceeded with the integration of gender perspectives and the situation of women into their work. These included identification of gender equality as an essential element for the realization of social, people-centred and sustainable development; inclusion of women in planning, decision-making and implementation processes at all levels; linking human rights and gender equality; attention to the different effects of political, economic, social and environmental factors on women and men and the consequent need to develop gender-sensitive policies; and the use of data disaggregated by sex and of indicators that provide separate analysis by sex (see Council resolution 2002/23, para. 4). It is expected that commissions will intensify their efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in their work, particularly in relation to the thematic issues of their multi-year programmes of work or in relation to annual themes (ibid., paras. 5-7).

11. Topics already identified for consideration by functional commissions in the framework of multi-year programmes of work provide opportunities for the Commission on the Status of Women to provide catalytic contributions by highlighting the gender perspectives of these topics. In 2003, for example, the

Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice will consider as a thematic issue the question of trafficking in human beings, especially women and children. This parallels the Commission's consideration of the human rights of women, also in 2003, the outcome of which could prove useful to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. (For an overview of commissions' multi-year programmes of work, see E/2002/CRP.3, table 2. The Commission on Sustainable Development will develop a new multi-year programme of work during its regular session in April and May 2003.) Such contributions have proved useful on a number of occasions in the past, when the Commission's agreed conclusions on a particular topic were brought to the attention of other processes. Examples include the Commission's agreed conclusions of 2002 on environmental management and mitigation of natural disasters, which were submitted to the preparatory process of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the agreed conclusions on gender and all forms of discrimination, which were provided as input to the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The Commission's consideration in 2003 of information and communication technologies and gender equality should constitute an important contribution to the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 (see General Assembly resolution 57/182, para. 7).

12. The Commission on the Status of Women also uses other means to highlight gender perspectives in the work of other functional commissions. For example, it has established systematic cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights, which includes joint Bureau meetings via videoconferencing and the participation of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women in the annual sessions of the Commission on Human Rights and in side events. This cooperation should be further enhanced with the planned participation of the Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights in the forty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Another means of exchanging information and enhancing attention to gender perspectives is briefings provided to the Commission about the work of other commissions, such as those provided on population and sustainable development in 2002.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

13. **The Commission on the Status of Women has systematically endeavoured to follow up on the Economic and Social Council's policy guidance by providing input to the Council's own work, as well as by highlighting gender perspectives in the work of functional commissions and other intergovernmental processes. The Secretariat intends to continue the practice of organizing panel discussions on gender mainstreaming, with the participation of presiding officers of the Council and its subsidiary bodies and representatives of relevant Secretariat entities, in particular in preparation for the Council's review, before 2005, of the implementation of agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming.**

14. **Given the thematic issues chosen for consideration by commissions in 2003, the Commission will have further opportunity to expand cooperation and coordination with the Council's subsidiary machinery on gender mainstreaming. In particular:**

(a) **The Commission could bring the output of its consideration of the topic "Participation and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women" to the attention of the preparatory process for the World Summit on the Information Society to enhance attention to gender perspectives;**

(b) **The Commission could bring the output of its consideration of the topic "Women's human rights and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls" to the attention of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Human Rights to enhance attention to gender perspectives in their work;**

(c) **The practice of joint Bureau meetings, including via teleconferencing, with the Commission on Human Rights could be usefully pursued with other commissions. In 2003, such interaction could be pursued in particular with the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, given that Commission's thematic focus and the participation of its Vice-Chairperson in the panel discussion on gender mainstreaming in June 2002. Similarly, the practice of Chairpersons participating in the sessions of other commissions could be extended to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice;**

(d) **In the future, depending on the decisions of the Council concerning the topics for its high-level and coordination segments, the Commission should continue to provide input drawn from its own work to highlight relevant gender perspectives for consideration by the Council.**

Notes

[1] See A/57/3 (Part I), chap. II, para. 44; for the final text, see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/57/3/Rev.1).